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A Colloquium on the *Year 2000* and the draft Graduation Program

Secretariat's Summary of Proceedings

A Report to the British Columbia Ministry of Education and to Colloquium Participants

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INTRODUCTION

On June 17, 18, and 19, 1991, a Colloquium on the Year 2000 and the draft Graduation Program, organized by the Ministry of Education, was held at Whistler, British Columbia. The Colloquium was in response to a number of concerns raised by the academic community. The Government and the Minister of Education, the Honourable Stanley B. Hagen, sponsored this event. During these three days, approximately 100 individuals from schools, colleges, universities, and the business community participated in an open forum to discuss the Year 2000 Programs and, particularly, to respond to a draft document on the Graduation Program.

This forum, in the words of the Education Deputy Minister, Wayne Desharnais, was organized "to provide an opportunity to talk with more clarity, more passion, and more purpose" about important educational changes now underway "to help us serve our young people and our entire society more effectively in the future." Its purpose, also, as the Deputy Minister explained in his welcoming address, was to allow the Ministry of Education and its officials to listen to what educational and business leaders had to say about proposed program changes for the senior grades. As he put it: "We need to listen, to understand, and to value each other's perspectives to ensure that the programs we offer . . . are directed towards building the knowledge, skills, and attitudes young learners and citizens need for a productive life now and in the future."

Viewed within its historical context, the Whistler Colloquium represented another step in a long and comprehensive public consultation process about educational change which began in 1985 with the *Let's Talk About Schools* report—and which may be traced more directly to the 1988 Royal Commission on Education report, *A Legacy for Learners*. As a consequence of the Royal Commission's work, the Provincial Government embarked on a series of initiatives designed to prepare British Columbia schools, and the young people who attend them, for the challenges of the 21st century. Beginning in 1989, provincial officials introduced a *Policy Directions* document, a new *School Act* and Regulations, and the document entitled *Year 2000: A Framework for Learning*. Subsequent to these, the Provincial Government has published documents proposing changes to the Primary, Intermediate, and Graduation Programs. The Primary Program is presently being implemented. Proposals related to the nature of the Intermediate and Graduation Programs are currently under discussion. It was the express purpose of the Whistler Colloquium to provide school, post-secondary and business representatives with a formal opportunity to express their views of changes proposed for the Graduation Program.

SECRETARIAT'S TASKS

Members of the Secretariat were asked to assist the consultation process initiated by the Ministry of Education at Whistler in three ways. First, we were requested to help organize the means by which Colloquium participants from the school, post-secondary and business sectors could express their views about the nature of the educational change now taking place in British Columbia and, in particular, their responses to the Graduation Program document now circulating in draft form. In this regard, the Secretariat was charged with responsibility for collecting all written materials—including group reports, individuals' comments, and assorted notes—which reflected the sentiments and ideas of those participating in the Colloquium, as well as the inquiries and concerns they expressed about the proposed Graduation Program and its general implications for provincial education and society.

Second, the Secretariat was asked to assist in constructing the agenda for the three-day Colloquium by helping the participants identify the central questions and issues around which they wished to focus their discussions. It was the Secretariat's task to categorize these questions for participants and to provide an interim overview to inform Colloquium members about the character and directions of the discussions taking place within the various groups.

Third, and finally, the Secretariat was asked to provide to the best of its ability an accurate and objective written summary of the Colloquium's proceedings—and to make this summary available both to participants and to the Ministry of Education. Accordingly, in keeping with this desire for impartiality, we have carried out this task "at arm's length" from the Ministry and can assure participants that the sentiments recorded here are entirely their own, or at least as we have understood them.

In undertaking this assignment, the Secretariat has read every comment the participants committed to paper and has sought to report, wherever possible, in the exact language used by Colloquium members to express their views and questions. We recognize that our decision to do this has led to a longer and more comprehensive summary of proceedings than originally imagined. We believe, however, that this decision was warranted. The Ministry of Education has assured participants that their views will constitute an important part of the information base to be used by Government in reformulating its ideas about the Graduation Program. For this reason, we thought it necessary to provide a full accounting of what was said, before we attempted to draw a few general observations about the central themes and messages contained within the text of the discussions.

ORGANIZATION OF THE REPORT

During the first evening of the Colloquium, participants set the character and course of activities for the following two days by defining questions in seven areas which they felt were central to the discussion of educational change, especially as it related to the proposed Graduation Program. These areas of questions were as follows:

1. What ought to be the curriculum content? What is the process through which it should be developed? How should it be taught?
2. How do we organize for learning? What should the program design and structure be?
3. What constitutes a smooth transition from Intermediate to Graduation Programs; from the world of school to the world of work and post-secondary education?
4. What are the nature and roles of evaluation, assessment and standards?
5. How can we prepare teachers to teach in the new Graduation Program?
6. What conditions are necessary for successful implementation? What are anticipated concerns? and,
7. How do we ensure equity of access for all students?

In preparing this report, we decided not to follow the structure imposed by these questions. Upon further reflection and analysis, we discovered the principal elements of these seven areas of inquiry fell more naturally under four broad categories—curriculum, assessment, teacher preparation, and implementation. As the Table of Contents indicates, we have grouped related sub-topics under each of these four headings for convenience. Our rationale for doing this was to organize complex ideas and themes as simply as possible while attempting to illustrate their intertwined nature.

In addition to these four major divisions, we have seen fit to add a brief concluding section which offers a number of the Secretariat's summary observations. Given our unique vantage point in examining participants' notes and comments, we thought it appropriate to underscore several major themes that appeared throughout the text of the proceedings, or that seemed to be of sufficient gravity to demand restatement.

CURRICULUM

The Purpose of the Graduation Program

In light of the fact that curriculum and pedagogical reform has been at the heart of recent provincial efforts to encourage educational change, it was not surprising that questions and issues to do with curriculum and teaching styles appeared to be very much on the minds of Colloquium participants. This interest on the part of Colloquium members may also be explained in the fact that debate over the character of school curricula is seen to be an important part of discussion about public policy in general. After all, it is in the curriculum where society decides what to preserve about its past and present, and what knowledge and values it wishes to transmit to future generations.

Colloquium participants expressed a number of concerns and some confusion concerning the purpose of the Graduation Program as currently represented in the draft document. Several asked: "How can a balance be achieved between individual and societal needs?" This was one of the fundamental questions that animated participants' discussion.

"What is the point of the curriculum?" someone asked. Markedly different responses were offered in considering this matter. Participants inquired: "Should we prepare students for university or college?" or, should "we let them experience the success of learning?" "What is a curriculum for the 21st century?" One group asked: "What is involved in being an educated citizen?" "What knowledge, skills, and attitudes should all students have when they leave school?" "How do we provide students with a broad, liberal education and, at the same time, make the curriculum relevant to all young people with different backgrounds [and] interests?" And, another advised: "Put a value on education for the learning itself, not as a ticket to something else." Others inquired: "What are the assumptions [and] rationales underlying what should be learned?" A few participants saw the purpose of curriculum to promote excellence. "Set high expectations" and "pursue excellence," they wrote.

Curriculum Content

"What knowledge is of value?" "What ought to be the content of the curriculum?" These proved to be two other major questions around which the Colloquium's discussion about curriculum continued.

As in other aspects of the Colloquium, participants' views disclosed a deep tension between, on one hand, a commitment to the integrity of a discipline-based curriculum and, on the other, a commitment to inter-disciplinary study. "How [can the goals of] integration be met without sacrificing discipline-based skills and knowledge?" they asked.

Various other comments were directed toward this topic. Those committed to a discipline-based focus offered, for example: "Will the curriculum contain many of the 'great ideas' of history and not

just the current issues?" "There is too much emphasis on integration." "Integration of materials for broader application must be second to the mastery of core programs." "Don't integrate things that don't need to be integrated!" "Ensure the building blocks are there before you make the connections." "Breadth follows depth." "Linking [knowledge] depends upon some basic pre-knowledge." "De-emphasis of 'canons' is likely to result in a limited grasp of knowledge."

Others, however, expressed support for the concept of curricular integration. Proponents of this position stated: "Integration is an important issue: It increases efficiency in delivery and learning." Someone else observed: "The curriculum should integrate disciplines and learning processes." "Is there," someone asked, "really a distinctly different basic education required by students moving into different fields of endeavour?"

Others were concerned about what they saw to be a lack of decisiveness in the proposed program regarding the values placed on disciplinary and inter-disciplinary studies. One participant said, "Choose between a problem and task-oriented approach or a discipline-based" curriculum. "Clarify," another requested, "the approach to learning to be followed in this new program."

Some groups and individuals raised questions or made specific recommendations as to what should be included in the curriculum. "Will the skills developed be the ones needed to be successful at college or university?" someone inquired. Several advised that the curriculum, "should contain a course related to forestry or natural resources," that it "needs a real emphasis on science and technology," that it requires "a values dimension which includes a considerations of ethics," and that it should include "problem-solving skills essential in business".

Others, who were apparently less concerned with the acquisition of a central body of knowledge, viewed curriculum content as something that should be focused on the individual, or that should help produce the 'educated citizen.' For example, one group enumerated a list of "developmental" learning outcomes suitable for the Graduation Program. This list included: "Self-esteem; focus on the value of the individual; problem solving skills; critical thinking; communication skills; independence in learners; mathematical ability; core skills in Mathematics, Science, English, technology; social, economic, global and historical understandings; survival skills, and skills associated with human and social development." "A common core should be taught," several participants contended. However, the knowledge or skills that should constitute the basis of a common curriculum were not agreed upon during the Colloquium.

Participants then turned to the questions: "Who should define and develop the curriculum?" And, "who decides what the curriculum should be"? "Input," many Colloquium members believed, "should come from three constituencies—educators, the customers of the end-product [business community and post-secondary institutions] and the learners." There must exist, "a collaborative design effort among stakeholders," one group observed. "Curriculum development should have input from all key potential users," another concluded.

Curriculum Structure

The debate over whether to adhere to a discipline-based curriculum or to move towards a learner-focused curriculum was revisited in the discussion on program structure. This tension was illustrated by the following questions: "How can curriculum design and delivery accommodate a wide range of student abilities and, at the same time, meet appropriate prerequisites for further study?" Can a system be organized "to allow for student flexibility and choice, while meeting societal demands for competency on specified outcomes?" And, finally: "Will students be disciplined and trained to accept rigour as part of the natural learning process?" "Rigour is a must," concluded one participant. But others asked: "How do you structure a program that allows success for every child?"

Within the general discussion surrounding curriculum structure, Colloquium participants dealt with four principal areas of concern—the transition from the Intermediate to the Graduation Program, the character of the General Studies component, the academic and career options afforded by the new program, and the nature of teaching and learning that will be required to support this change.

Transitions:

Turning first to the topic of transition, or the question of articulation between different levels of the system, participants discussed the apparent "philosophical lurch" from the Intermediate to the Graduation Program, and also questioned the fidelity of fit that exists between the Graduation Program and the world beyond secondary schooling.

"What does it mean to be a graduate of the Intermediate Program?" asked one. It is a "ragged front," answered another. "Consider [the] implications for a wide variation of knowledge and skills [among] Intermediate Program graduates entering the Graduation Program," others advised. "Will there need to be entry-level skill assessments?" asked another. "Standards must be set for entrance into the Graduation Program," asserted someone else.

The advice participants gave here included, "allow the shift [between programs] to be less sudden by moving the use of letter grades down into the Intermediate Program and consider a more steady transition toward letter grades," and "ensure that core subjects in the Intermediate Program have greater structure with respect to the attainment of a certain level of achievement in those subjects".

Several participants recommended "a transition period in the Intermediate Program". They said: "Consider a transition year or years to bring students to a level necessary to achieve goals of common curriculum core." Perhaps, several suggested, the "Graduation Program should . . . be three or four years in length. In that way, Grades nine and ten could be used as transition or exploration years".

Another aspect of transition discussed during the Colloquium was the exit from the Graduation Program. "What skills are necessary in one phase [for example, the world of work] for students to

move successfully into another?" A smooth transition, several people suggested, would be more likely if students were provided with "relevant skills". Examples of these skills were given as: "basic literacy skills; basic numeracy skills; basic computer skills; basic communication skills; problem-solving skills; learning, study, and organizational skills; mathematical literacy; scientific and technological literacy; interpersonal social skills; creative and artistic abilities; understanding of language and culture; citizenship;" as well as attitudes which reflect "an appropriate level of maturity".

General Studies:

During the Colloquium, participants reviewed the General Studies component of the Graduation Program. There was by no means unanimity in how Colloquium members responded to this part of the program. The differences among participants may be attributed, perhaps, to differences in philosophy and values and reflected, no doubt, tensions expressed in earlier discussionsbetween "broad-based preparation" and "specialization" advocates.

In a discussion of what the "well-educated graduate should know," Colloquium members recommended a "careful review of the balance between General Studies and Options". Here participants advised: "Redefine and revalue the General Studies in terms of clear objectives for minimum standards of competence that are acceptable for all students, regardless of career choice after graduation."

Options:

The discussion concerning options centred upon the number of options made available to students, preparation for making choices among options and, related to these, the system supports required to ensure that choices could be judiciously made.

It is notable that many participants favoured reducing the number of options. Reasons for this appeared to vary. One individual was concerned with "forcing youngsters to make decisions too early in life". Another said: "It is difficult for students to make decisions." Another proposed: "What about reducing their number to three; for example, 'advanced education,' career,' and 'explorations' options."

Further to this, concerns were expressed about the extent of students' preparation to choose among options or to change their selection without unreasonable penalty. To illustrate: "Students may be limiting future career and educational options by specializing too early," one person wrote. Students need advice in order to make "realistic and informed choice[s]," added another. Various participants also expressed concern about movement from "option to option". While some participants focused on maintaining "flexibility of transfer between options," others expressed the view that "too much flexibility in options" already existed.

Whatever the number of options ultimately selected for the Graduation Program, participants called for a "wider dissemination of information about options," and the availability of "counselling for students and parents". "Students need support in terms of information on the labour market and an awareness of options," one group concluded.

Participants also discussed two other aspects of the General Studies component—unit structure and work experience. One participant asked: "Is unit structure [a] dog's breakfast or a smorgasbord?" "What is its intent and is it likely to be accomplished?" "What are the rules governing the choice of optional units?" And: "Will courses that are successfully challenged by students be replaced by others so that 52 units are still required?" Concerning work experience, participants wrestled with the questions: "What is its purpose?" "What value and content should be given to work experience?" "How do we ensure student exposure to work experience programs?" "How do we ensure equity of opportunity for all?" "How do we ensure a variety of work experiences?" One suggestion made was: "Establish partnerships to facilitate work experience."

Speaking to the need to clarify many tangled issues related to this part of the proposal, Colloquium participants advised that it was necessary to undertake "a careful review of the structure and balance of General Studies and Options".

Teaching and Learning in the New Program:

To the question, "How should the curriculum be taught?" participants responded: "[The] teacher must "model" the knowledge, skills and attitudes we wish to see in learners." They continued: "The knowledge base of teachers is critical and should be re-emphasized in the program." "Alternative delivery systems should be also used," others added.

Still others noted, "a teacher must use every possible way of teaching, using whatever techniques help students achieve the goals of learning". "Teachers should network," it was further observed. "A multiplicity of learning opportunities [should be made available] from teachers, from peers, from authorities, from outside experiences, from activities, from learning aids, from small groups and large group presentations and from discussions." Learning, one participant observed, must be based upon "primarily a group focus rather than an individual focus in terms of the process used. That is, learning experiences should occur as much as possible in a social setting. Students should be able to do things in depth at the graduation level."

The matter of how best to deliver the curriculum provoked numerous questions and comments. For example, Colloquium members wrote: "Curriculum should allow students to develop their own strategies for learning." "It should allow opportunities for students to develop their own particular interests." It is critical that students be "active participants". To improve methods of curriculum delivery, participants recommended the use of approaches such as "co-operative learning, collaborative learning, [and] mentorship". One asked: "How does learning best occur so the learners can carry it with them?" "Students should experience "success" and find "value in the [learning] process," others added.

Colloquium members offered an array of questions for Graduation Program developers to consider, questions such as: "How will students adjust to changes in style, assessment and standards?" "How do we ensure that students are prepared and appropriately placed?" "How do children construct meaning from their experience?" "How will we encourage students to work beyond minimum standards and achieve excellence?" "How does every child find his or her own measure of success?" "How do you value individual and varied successes in school when the next step, the world, is so competitive?" And: "How will a learner-focused approach to the [teaching] process and institutional needs [such as timetabling and certification] be reconciled?"

Linking Curriculum and Assessment

Participants stated that assessment and evaluation should be "linked to the larger goals of courses, programs, and provincial goals". Participants advised that "curricula developers should work in concert with [those who develop and administer] assessment" to ensure that "guidelines for assessment be supplied as part of curriculum documents". Others proposed an "alignment of assessment instruments with learning tasks". "Course standards [should] be determined and published before the course is taught," someone else observed. In summary, participants generally agreed that, wherever possible, "evaluation should relate to standards defined for the intended learning outcomes of the curriculum".

ASSESSMENT, EVALUATION, STANDARDS AND REPORTING

Colloquium participants identified seven major areas of concern related to matters of measurement and reporting. Several of these focused generally on assessment, evaluation, and standards as part of the wide-ranging discussion of the question: "What is the nature of assessment, evaluation, and standards?"

The text of the discussion revealed basic areas of disagreement which participants were unable to resolve. They complained that the lack of clarity in the draft Graduation document made it somewhat difficult to debate assessment issues and, ultimately, prevented them from formulating recommendations. However, their discussions were marked by certain philosophical tensions which could be expressed in two ways; first, as a competition between learner-driven curriculum and externally-set standards; and second, as a tension between schooling for the purposes of individual development and schooling for the collective good of society.

The complexity of this debate was illustrated in several ways. Participants discussed the relative values of criterion-referenced versus normative-referenced evaluation, provincial examinations versus teacher assessment and student self-evaluation, the virtues and values of traditional means of reporting and the use of transcripts, as well as the use of various forms of measurement to denote student and system accountability.

"What is the relationship between learner-focused and self-directed learning and assessment?" "Do we have a tension in the Graduation Program document between exact specifications and criterion reference?" And, "how would universal standards fit into the concept of learner-focused assessment"? These three questions lay at the heart of much of the Colloquium's discussion of learning and assessment.

Many related questions were similarly framed, including: "What is important enough to assess?" "What and who will it inform?" "What will the roles and variety of assessment be?" "How often will evaluative procedures take place?" "Who evaluates what and whom?" And, "can students fail"?

"Why do we assess? Do we harm the student?" one participant asked. "Who determines the ability level of the student?" "Is evaluation equal for all students, all areas, all teachers?" Others asked: "How will self-assessment by the student, teacher assessment of the student, and provincial assessment of the student be consistent enough to be meaningful?"

Participants went on to suggest that "a serious examination of different ways of knowing" be undertaken. Will we develop "a system [that] accepts that we don't know a child's full potential"? Someone else recommended the importance of changing "social and public attitudes to different types of learning and evaluation" as well as changing "society's attitudes to different professions". "Evaluation," one participant suggested, "should provide a means for the recognition of mastery". Another asked: "How or where [will] criteria for evaluation cross those for standards?"

Standards

The question, "How can standards be clearly defined for the acceptance and understanding of the total community?" was raised by Colloquium participants in many ways. For example, participants inquired: "Who are [standards] for—the Ministry, the schools, for parents, or for employers?"

Some argued that the issue of standards "begs a balance between individual wants and societal needs". Such a view was echoed specifically in the following comment: "Lack of clear, measurable, objective standards has a high risk of failure. What is the risk of failure? Lack of trust in the system to deliver." "Can standards be achieved," someone else inquired, "without minimal levels of competence being established"?

Others at the Colloquium were concerned that "exit standards are driving the system instead of learners' needs driving it." and that "exit standards will dictate to the Graduation Program [causing it to lose] the basic thrust of change". An "assessment scheme," someone else countered, "has to be sensitive to the range of student accomplishments [and to student] diversity".

The preceding questions and comments prompted other questions. For example: "Who is responsible for setting standards?" "For whom are standards set?" "Will there be special standards for special groups?" Will standards be the same for all students?" "Will standards be the same in all schools?" "Given some sort of universal standard, how do you evaluate against it?" "What criteria will be used to determine standards?" And, finally: "Will the Ministry cogitate about the place and importance of assessment, evaluation, and standards in the widening gap between the haves and the have nots?"

Colloquium members offered little advice in response to these questions, save for two comments. One of these recommended that "standards [should be] set by interest groups concerned". The other called for standards to be set which "meet the needs of all professions, trades, and universities". However, within the broad context of this discussion, others questioned the fundamental purpose upon which secondary education is founded. "School must not just prepare students for the real world: It should give them the foundation for learning. [We] must give students the best education we can to prepare them." Another stated: "The purpose of post-secondary education is specialization." Someone else asked: "What is the message the university is sending out to these students . . . specialization or broad preparation?" Another wondered, "What is the source of the pressure for specialization? The secondary school or the post-secondary institutions?"

One participant observed: "We are not producing people in high school that are supposed to be scientists or historians." "[We are] talking about producing people who are scientific, literate-minded and educated." One participant asked: "What does success look like for a graduation program?" Someone else concluded: "Standards are crucial because they give meaning to the process of assessment and evaluation and, in large measure, determine what is taught." "At the end of whatever standards there are in place," another responded, "I expect a graduate to be able to function usefully in the community and Province."

Participants related the question of standards to the measurement of success. "The central question with evaluation" one stated, "is the purpose for which it is used—whether for streaming, or to accent learning." "Evaluation systems" another commented, "[must have] consistent criteria values used objectively." "Criterion-referenced assessment [objective criteria]," should "be established for all subjects." "Set the criteria while developing curriculum," noted another. "What aspects of the evaluation system are designed to promote excellence wherever possible and to encourage the motivated student to strive for more than they would otherwise?" someone else inquired. Although "criterion references . . . determine student progress" as one participant noted, others asked how the "transition between criterion- and norm-referenced" assessment would be accomplished. "In the end," one participant concluded, "there should be a norm-referenced type of assessment".

Provincial Examinations—Yes or No

Participants reflected two views about one long-standing educational issue: "Should there be provincial exams?" Those promoting the continued use of provincial exams said, "Exams are necessary but need to be more appropriate—more authentic". A question was also raised about whether provincial exams could and should test learning processes instead of basic knowledge. Exams are needed, one group argued, "because schools would otherwise vary in teaching and learning. There should be some common competencies that could be tested." To this they added: "There is a "need to establish the core learning which should be provincially assessed." Others recommended exams, "where there is common content" but argued that the importance of provincial exams should be appreciably reduced.

"Given that graduation," wrote one participant, "should involve the attainment of certain minimal but absolute levels of competency in appropriate sets of courses, some of which will have well-defined curricula, is there any significant reason that evaluation of student performance should not continue to be based on objective criteria and expressed numerically"? Another asked, "Will the provincial examination program be brought into line with the new program's philosophy"?

In direct contrast, other participants argued strongly against provincial exams. Several claimed "a portfolio [of student work] is a much more realistic assessment, because [exams] badly alter the teaching process [and] interfere with teaching time". "Presently," someone else added, "curriculum is directed toward acquisition by the students of examinable knowledge and skills. This has warped curriculum delivery to the point that it needs to be repaired [for example, chemistry is no longer a laboratory science, since laboratory skills are not assessed]." Another observed: "The practice [of provincial exams] has evolved towards teachers teaching towards exams." "Measuring standards," others noted, "involves a sampling of achievement or knowledge. The past indicates that what is most easily measured will be most often tested."

Colloquium participants also debated at greater length whether the present grading system should be continued. Considerable support was registered for maintaining a system of assessment that was "clear, honest, and accurate". Various comments endorsed this view. "Evaluations should not give students a false expectation of themselves." What they "can do and cannot do should be included." "Knowledge, skills and attitudes should all be reported as appropriate." And, one concluded, it needs to be an "honest assessment of [the] student".

"Anecdotal reports" others wrote, "will be an enormous problem in paperwork and record keeping". Such a form of reporting does not seem "adequate," someone else said. "How does the stakeholder evaluate this?" another inquired. Advice proffered here included: "Provide a standard report format," "provide provincial reporting guidelines," and use "letter grades with uniform meaning."

Others explored the questions: "What is the role of letter grades?" "How do alternate forms of assessment translate into letter grades?" "How will letter grades be used in the case of less able students?" And, "what would a system be like without As, Bs, and Cs?"

Although one participant stated, "The prime goal of [assessment] is to inform students on how well they are learning and what they are able to do," many participants expressed concern with the usefulness of such information for a diverse audience. "Who looks at transcripts and what do they need?" one inquired. "Are transcripts to enable the decisions of students, teachers, school administrators, parents, post-graduate institutions or employers?"

But one participant explained: "I am concerned. Evaluation and assessment should continue to be based on a reasonably standard set of examinations—such as the present provincial exams—so that students will know how they stack up to other students. In my view, this should continue to include the 'F' grade. [This is] important for the hiring process or for admissions to advanced educational institutions."

In support of this position, others argued that transcripts should show both provincial and school information, including "failure of courses" and "repeat of courses". "All information," another added, "has to be routinely documented and presented . . . achievement, attempts, attendance, results from Grade 11 and 12." Alternatively, one participant wrote: "Allow rewrites for higher standards and have the transcript give a clear indication of the time it took to reach this level of competency." Another added: "Post-secondary institutions and employers want the entire picture, including failures and attempts. [They] want the facts."

Many questions were raised about the implications of this new program for reporting and assessment procedures, including: "Will the post-secondary institutions accept the credentials of these new graduates?" "Will these students be able to go outside the Province for post-secondary work without academic penalty?" "How will we know that the pre-requisites have been met for transfer to post-secondary institutions?" And, "should the universities admit students based on Graduation Program assessments"?

On a broader front, questions were also raised about the accountability of the new program and how it would be assessed itself. The following three questions generally illustrated the queries raised: "What kinds of data will be collected to measure the program's success?" "How will it be collected?" And, "who will collect it"?

As a footnote to the above discussion, many comments were made and questions asked about student self-evaluation. This topic appeared to be uncharted territory for many of the participants and they appeared unable and unwilling to make any judgements without further information. The questions they posed about self-evaluation included: "How will students be prepared for increased

self-direction and self-evaluation?" "Student self-assessment [is] a cumbersome and unwieldy process." Is it "initiated by the student for the student"? "What components will students evaluate?" "How will it articulate with other ways of evaluation?" And, "what standards are reflected in student self-evaluation"?

TEACHER PREPARATION

As in the case of other topics discussed, the question "How can we prepare teachers to teach in the Graduation Program?" engendered considerable participant interest and a variety of commentary and questions about the character and purposes of the teacher education programs necessary to sustain the Graduation Program, as currently envisioned. Colloquium participants generally inquired: "How can we assist teachers in making the shift from present practices to new ways of doing things?" "How do we train teachers to cope with a very different environment?" "Can we expect new and different things from teachers?" "Can teachers be expected to be 'all things to all students?'" And, "How can we retrain or [re]educate a 30,000-person workforce in order to deliver educational change"?

One individual wrote: "Teachers are not now responding adequately to demands placed upon them. How can they *then* respond to the additional and complex demands that this new program will place upon them?" Another queried: "How necessary is formal teacher training when we see graduates who obvously can't teach, while . . . we see people with no formal teacher training who are exceptional teachers?" This view, however, was singular in its expression. In the main, Colloquium participants appeared to agree more commonly that the quality and relevance of teacher education programs are "critical to the success" of the Graduation Program, as one participant put it, and that the "re-education" of the current teaching force, to quote another, "is central to implementation". Others summarized the significance of teacher preparation in similar ways: "Everything depends on the commitment of teachers and their adequate preparation and training," one wrote. "Teaching methods and attitudes must change before effective implementation can occur," another added.

Written materials submitted to the Secretariat illustrate that much of the Colloquium's discussion about teacher preparation centred around three broad topics—responsibility for the overall direction and development of teacher education, the character of the teacher education program itself, and the provisions that should be made to upgrade existing in-service or professional development programs. In each of these three areas, there appears be be a variety of views and strategies about what might be done to bring teacher education programs in line with the expectations and requirements of the new Graduation Program.

The Development of Teacher Education

Turning to the first of these areas, a score of questions was raised, for example, about the nature of relationships within the educational community and the role that the public and different sectors of the educational system should play in determining teacher preparation programs. "What role should parents have in teacher education?" one individual asked. Another inquired: "What voice should the community outside the universities have in shaping teacher preparation?" Others asked: "What would be the best relationship between the universities and the schools in the teacher education process?" "How can professionals from other disciplines be brought into the school system?" And, "what agencies will cope with the tremendous number of courses, workshops, and the like necessary to prepare teachers for the new program"?

Commenting on the kinds of approaches that might serve those charged with implementing the Graduation Program, Colloquium members offered various kinds of advice, much of it recommending that universities share responsibility for program development: "Teacher education must be a process involving classroom practitioners, faculty, parents, and community representatives," "broader school-university links should be in place," "teachers, colleges, universities, the College of Teachers, and the Ministry of Education should all be involved," and "input from all stakeholders is required."

The Character of Teacher Education

Related to the foregoing discussion, participants also raised questions about the current state and emphasis of teacher education within the universities. The following questions were generally characteristic of this line of inquiry: "Will the present methods of pre-service teacher education remain in place?" "How can the research emphasis, which dominates the university setting, be made to work to the advantage of teacher education programs rather than in competition with them?" And, "how can small universities and colleges assume the role of teacher preparation without a broad, solid scholarly base with time for research and reflection"? One individual allowed that the "publish or perish" rule which governs academic behaviour, and which promotes faculty allegiance to disciplinary areas, does not necessarily mean that "we cannot work across the curriculum" for the sake of integration. This person further observed that educators "must resist trying to re-organize the university along these patterns" and that currently "enough flexibility exists in the system" to meet the needs of the Graduation Program.

In their personal comments, several individuals called for changes in the preparation aspiring teachers now receive. "Changes are required in faculties of education, " one wrote. Another added, "pre-service [education] should be reassessed and should articulate with post-service". Someone else noted, "deep, not surface, change is required in teacher education". Two comments were specifically directed at the professoriate responsible for preparing teachers. One individual proposed: "Retrain university professors who do not have an educational background." Another advised: "Faculty preparing student teachers must model a variety of instructional processes and organize a variety of ways of learning that teachers may wish to use in classrooms."

Judging by the written materials made available to the Secretariat, the greater part of the discussion on the topic of teacher education revolved around what should be taught to teachers-in-preparation and how this body of knowledge and skills should be taught. Not surprisingly, the discussion was marked by age-old tensions between emphasis on academic content and emphasis on pedagogical process, between a research and a practical focus for study, and between disciplinary specialization and a multi-disciplinary or integrated approach.

Exponents of what might be fairly termed "traditional liberal education" provided various kinds of advice in support of their values and views, for example: "Ensure adequate preparation of teachers by disciplines." "Emphasize critical thinking." "Teachers should be encouraged to do research." "Academic specialization should continue." "Teachers require comprehensive knowledge." "A

system should be developed to promote excellence in teaching." And, "excellence should be rewarded and recognized—we cannot afford **not** to do this". Someone else added: "Teachers must have vibrant intellectual lives, they must have a passion for what they do, and they must believe that they have something that is beneficial for people to know." "How intellectual is the [current] teacher education program?" one individual asked. Another inquired: "Are core subjects [in teacher preparation programs] taught contextually?" One individual concluded: "Teacher education should involve intellectual judgement." Someone else asked: "Where do you find the 'educated citizens' who will become teachers.?"

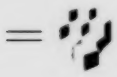
In contrast to such sentiments, other Colloquium participants inquired: "What skills in addition to academic competence should be required of teachers?" "What about the teacher's role as one that is **to teach**?" And, "how do we emphasize that teachers teach students as a priority over teaching subjects"? Proponents of a less discipline-bound and a more process-focused approach argued, for example, that "teachers must be prepared to teach in more than one discipline," that "new teachers should have a 'general' not a 'major' degree in their subject area," that there should be a stronger focus on "the field of education," that teachers should learn "new skills from partnerships with business and industry," and that teacher education should allow for "greater diversity and flexibility".

In line with this emphasis on pedagogical processes, a handful of comments underscored the importance of team teaching during student practica and, generally, in the schools. One individual wrote: "Teachers should work in teams to share knowledge, develop projects, do curriculum revision, and to ensure short and long-term continuity for students." Another observed: "Team teaching and peer-group learning should be emphasized."

In this regard, Colloquium participants offered a further array of suggestions about strengthening preparation processes, including: "Teachers require wider learning and living experiences." "Teachers require improved communications skills." Teachers should be assisted "in becoming sensitive to the cultures from which students come". Teachers should model "lifelong learning". Teachers require "broader teaching strategies". And, "teachers require greater exposure to and understanding of business and industry".

Approximately a half-dozen participants advised that teachers should be able to make greater use of the educational technology that now exists. "Teachers should be trained in technology systems [such as] research, information processing, and solution development," one person noted. Another proposed: "Computer-integrated teaching should be used to assist in teaching essay writing, grammatical correction, and corrections in mathematics."

A small part of the Colloquium's discussion on teacher preparation also dealt with two additional topics—criteria for admission into teacher preparation programs and the effects of impending educational change on those who work in classrooms. "What personality characteristics will teachers require to be effective in the new program?" one person asked in a way that reflected the general line of inquiry followed by participants. Another person adopted a more prescriptive approach and



defined certain characteristics effective teachers should possess, including the capacity to be innovative, to communicate clearly, to work well with people, to be competent in the disciplines they teach, and to bring to their subjects "in-depth understandings and high conceptual abilities".

A dozen or so questions and comments were directed to the effects of change on the school workforce. Several individuals inquired, for example: "How can threatening aspects of change be diminished?" "What activities are planned to prepare teachers for this educational change and to minimize their feelings of insecurity?" "Can changes take place in spite of certain teachers who will resist these changes?" And, "what rewards exist for teachers to co-operate in implementing new curricular changes and developing new teaching methods"? Along these lines, several other participants pointed out that "teachers should be given sufficient time and resources to prepare themselves for the new program," that "teachers require support," and that "teacher status and self-worth should be enhanced".

One important strand in the discussion on teacher preparation and the challenge posed by the Graduation Program is worthy of note. In its strategies reporting sheet, one group inquired: "How can teachers in the Intermediate Program prepare students adequately for the standards of the Graduation Program if the disciplines are integrated at the Intermediate level and teachers have *not* been trained in all component disciplines of their integrated courses?" Obviously, such a question has important implications for teacher education and for those charged with implementing all aspects of the new program.

In-Service and Professional Development

Turning to the final area of discussion about teacher preparation, questions were raised about the nature and scope of the in-service training required to support the new Graduation Program. Participants inquired, for example: "What kind of support and training will be available for school personnel as they move to the new program?" "What kind of teacher is needed to make the Graduation Program work?" "Who should be providing the in-service [programs]?" And, "how should such programs be provided"?

In discussing these topics, participants proposed an array of strategies to assist the educational transformation anticipated for the senior grades. One wrote: "Organize short courses in such a way that it does not cost the individual teacher money or time. These short courses should deal with team teaching and organizational techniques." Another added: "Retrain individuals through in-service programs based on mentors and internships." In various ways, others noted the enormity of the challenge the system as a whole will face in attempting to bring a considerable part of the educational workforce "up to speed". Suggestions were made to: "Identify a variety of in-service models," "provide support for 'action research,'" "introduce educational leaves" and other opportunities for "teacher renewal," "target funds for support services," "provide counselling," and offer courses to "reinterest" teachers in their subject areas. One or two participants cautioned that retraining teachers for the proposed Graduation Program will be a task of considerable dimension in that, ultimately, it will necessitate changing the existing beliefs, attitudes, and practices of a large part of the profession.

IMPLEMENTATION

One of the largest and most diverse questions dealt with by Colloquium members during the three days of discussion was the question of how best to implement the proposed Graduation Program. In early stages of their discussions, several groups began their work by attempting to define for themselves what the term "implementation" meant. One group defined it as "the process of bringing the program formally into the schools". Another defined it as "the overall plan to make [the program] a reality". Still others defined it as "putting all the resources into place —marketing, funding, evaluation, and revamping" or, as someone declared, "creating reality from theory".

Myriad questions of a general nature were raised about how the Graduation Program could and should be implemented. For example, participants inquired: "How can the Ministry of Education encourage system-wide change while building a sense of ownership in all stakeholders?" "How will the program be evaluated and updated to ensure that it stays current with the changing world?" "How much change will be allowed after implementation is under way?" "If curriculum is to be developed before implementation, what are the assumptions that are being made which will dictate the design?" "Is the intent to have fidelity in the implementation of all major elements of the program?" "Have any similar models been identified in other provinces or states which can be used to guide the implementation process?" "Is there adequate time allowed for implementation?" "How do you avoid narrow exit standards corrupting the philosophical orientation explicit in the Primary and Intermediate levels, while maintaining a level of quality in students?" "Are teachers, students, parents, administrators, and employers sufficiently committed to the program's philosophy to ensure its success?" And, "is the political will present to ensure implementation over the long term"?

This list of questions, it should be noted, was accompanied by a smaller body of commentary which questioned in plain language the need for a new program as outlined in the draft Graduation document. One individual observed: "Clearly, some stakeholders do not believe that the system is broken. Why try to fix it?" Another wrote: "Many parents don't believe a major overhaul is required!"

In the main, however, Colloquium participants appeared to acknowledge that some change to the character of the high school program was necessary to provide a better fit between the world of school and the world of work, or to make the learning experiences of students in the senior grades more relevant to the changing character of society and its institutions. It is apparent from the written materials examined by the Secretariat, and by the enormous number of questions raised about the nature of the proposed program and its implementation, that participants did not feel themselves to be sufficiently well informed about the changes taking place to offer advice in all areas. It may be said, however, that Colloquium members agreed that the Ministry of Education still had much important work to do in publicizing the character of the Graduation Program and, particularly, its meaning for parents, students, and teachers, as well as for educators and administrators from primary grades to colleges and universities.

In fact, judging by the considerable attention Colloquium members paid to the topic of communication, it may be said that it constituted one of the *three* key areas around which the wide-ranging discussion of implementation revolved. The other two areas of discussion were funding and other resources, and equity of opportunity as it applies to students and regions.

Communication

Beginning with communication, many inquiries were raised by participants about how various aspects of communication would be handled relating to the Graduation Program. The following questions illustrate the principal concerns expressed: "Will all the major questions raised about the Graduation Program be answered before full implementation begins?" "How will the government provide a clear picture of the program to everyone?" "How will criticism and negative reaction to the Graduation Program be dealt with at local levels?" "Will the experience of the pilot projects be well publicized to ensure on-going input for 'refining' the Graduation Program?" And, "who will take responsibility for creating the necessary links to the business community"?

In this regard, participants also offered constructive comments to educational planners and managers associated with the new program, including: "Address the rationale for the importance and the necessity of the change," "answer the current questions about the program before final implementation begins," "take responsibility for creating links to the business community," "get the public 'on side,'" and "ensure the participation of all."

Funding and Other Resources

Similarly, participants seemed unsure about how the financial and other resources necessary to support and sustain the implementation of the new program would be obtained. Obviously, this, too, reflected "a lack of information," as one person put it, about the program's financial implications. Individuals explored such implications in various questions. For example, they asked: "Given that the present system is expensive, and given no additional resources, can resources be found or reallocated to make the Graduation Program work?" "Will the necessary resources for implementation be available at the appropriate times?" "How can existing resources be allocated?" "Is there really 'new' money available?" "Will there be sufficient funding for implementation?" "Does anyone know how much?" "Will a lack of dollars interfere with the implementation process?" "Will funds be available to allow full implementation of the Graduation Program, or will schools end up selecting only certain portions of it, thereby creating fragmented programs?" And, "has anyone estimated the overall cost of introducing this program? If so, where will the funds come from?"

Equity and Students

The third major aspect of implementation dealt with by Colloquium members generally concerned the broad issue of equity and the possible effects of the proposed program on students. In examining these matters, participants inquired, for example: "How will [the program] ensure educational equity for all students?" "What will happen in small schools where all program options might not be

viable? What provisions will be made?" "Will students across the Province have access to all components of the new program?" And, "what about the kid in the middle who might not be defined as 'special' but is getting lost in the shuffle"?

Clearly, the documentation provided by several Colloquium members testified to an uneasiness on the part of some about the impact of the proposed program on special students and on those attending school in remote and rural regions throughout the Province. One individual wrote that the "systemic barriers" to equity must be identified. Another added that the "variability of student needs must be understood," whether they had to do with "regions, programs, or individuals". Others wrote about the need for "equity in decision making," the importance of dealing with "discriminatory factors," making every student feel "honoured and valued," understanding the program's effects on special learners, ESL students, and First Nations peoples, and providing "small schools with special help". "The problem of equity for special needs children [especially as it pertains to resource personnel, resource material, and class size] should be considered," someone else noted. "Gifted children," another argued, "should be afforded the opportunities to reach their full potential in terms of their human and social development." Finally, some concern was expressed whether school facilities [as they currently exist] province-wide could accommodate the different needs of students and whether they could meet the requirements of the new program.

SECRETARIAT'S GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

In the written record of their discussions, Colloquium participants furnished various kinds of advice about how to improve the current concept of the Graduation Program and how to proceed in implementing the program in the months and years to come. From an analysis of the proceedings and the recommendations made by Colloquium members, it appears that the following six guidelines for action and reflection capture the essence and spirit of what participants generally said about educational change and the proposed Graduation Program.

1. **Provide greater clarification about the Graduation Program's purposes and emphases.** It is apparent from the large number of questions and comments found throughout the proceedings—many of which sought to address the program's underlying goals and strategies for implementation—that Colloquium participants were generally uncertain about the fundamental character of the Graduation Program, the values it embodies, and its ultimate purposes. In the words of one participant, "there is still a lack of information in the community and among stakeholders" about what it represents. As someone else put it: "Is it about attaining academic excellence or reducing the drop-out rate? Or, is it and can it be about both?" Similar kinds of questions were raised about whether the program is primarily intended to serve the learning needs of youngsters or the social and economic needs of the provincial community.

   The fact that several groups and participants struggled with elemental questions to do with the overall mission and goals of provincial schooling seems to suggest that public consciousness about educational affairs is less well developed than program planners imagine, and also suggests that continued attention should be directed toward promoting public and professional awareness about the meaning of educational changes now underway.

   In examining the character and structure of the proposed program, Colloquium members revisited age-old debates about the virtues of disciplinary versus interdisciplinary studies, knowledge versus skills, content versus process, the importance of tradition versus the importance of change, academic experience versus work experience, learner-centred versus standards-centred approaches, and criterion-referenced versus norm-referenced forms of assessment. Throughout many discussions, participants appeared unable to determine exactly what emphases or priorities the Graduation Program planners sought to place in these areas, what choices they had made, or exactly what balance they sought to achieve between competing educational ideals. Although participants appeared generally sympathetic to some of the motives characteristic of the proposed program—especially its intention toward making learning more relevant to more youngsters—they drew attention to what they saw as some philosophical ambiguity surrounding the values that lie at the heart of the program, especially as these values are expressed in the program's purposes, contents, structures, and methodologies.

   Several participants advised that the distinctive properties of the new program should be identified in more direct terms—and that its advantages and relevance should be more clearly argued, if the program is to be better understood. Furthermore, if the program specifically seeks to reduce the non-completion rate, to make what is learned more topical and interesting for a

greater number of youngsters, and to focus more tightly on developing better critical attitudes in the minds of young learners, these things should be openly declared and represented for what they are—the principal objectives of the program.

2. **Re-examine how the methodological shift is to be made from the Intermediate to the Graduation Program.** Colloquium participants were clearly concerned with the "philosophical lurch," as someone put it, that promises to occur as students move from a "developmental" form of learning in the Intermediate Program to a more disciplinary, as well as a more content- and standards-bound approach in the Graduation Program. In this matter, participants called for a transitionary year or years that would extend the Graduation Program downward to "smooth out" the pedagogical and other changes affecting learners.

3. **Re-examine the curriculum content and the nature of options offered in the Graduation Program**. It cannot be overstated that the substance of the curriculum taught is a sensitive matter of public policy and is something that concerns individuals and institutions far beyond the realm of the school. Strong feelings were expressed at this Colloquium by individuals and groups that the current program which prepares youngsters for post-secondary education has proved to be of both quality and value over time. Such sentiments should obviously be considered and respected as program planners wrestle with difficult questions about designing a curriculum which may better serve the vast majority of students in provincial schools, students who do *not* continue on to the post-secondary sector. Within the context of the important initiatives for change taking place, further thought, perhaps, should be given to why certain structures in secondary education have proved durable historically— and why certain elements of the present program may merit retention—even if other important aspects of the program are in need of change. Moreover, given the fact that many participants underscored the critical importance of securing broad-based public and educational support, it may prove judicious for program developers to reconsider the reasons why resistance to curriculum change continues to be expressed in some quarters.

4. **Clarify the nature of political and public commitment to the educational changes proposed.** Various participants stated that the Provincial Government's endorsement of educational change did not always appear to be consistent and, accordingly, they raised questions about whether sufficient political will, as well as public support, existed to sponsor the long-term change in schooling that is required. Participants advised that all parties needed to build commitment to program changes over an extended period of time and that continuity in commitment is vital.

5. **Clarify the financial implications of the proposed program**. A large number of Colloquium members seemed to assume that additional funds are required to launch and support the new Graduation Program. Some others, however, wondered if the introduction of the new program would lead to reallocations in funding, or the establishment of new priorities in spending. One or two participants put the matter more directly by asking if additional funds would be made available for this educational initiative and, if so, how much? It is fair to report that these issues generated considerable concern. Perhaps the corollary to advice offered by participants should also be noted: Implement the new program only at a pace commensurate with resources.

6. **Allow sufficient time for program development and implementation.** Participants implicitly and explicitly asked in many of their comments if sufficient time had been allowed to develop and introduce the program. Colloquium groups and individuals observed that the time for implementation should not be "rushed". In their views, time was an important factor in light of the work to be done, notably: developing models for curriculum, class, and school organization before implementating the program on a provincial basis; developing "greater awareness" and more "positive attitudes toward change" among the public and those in the educational community; "fine tuning" the processes for "planning, preparation, and interaction"; "developing the curricular materials necessary to support the program"; developing the teacher support requisite for program success; resolving the concerns of colleges and universities with problems to do with transfer credits and standards; initiating the public relations and community partnerships necessary for successful implementation; providing information to parents to enable them to assist their children in making informed educational and career choices; providing sufficient numbers of trained counsellors to advise parents and students about the possibilities offered in the new program; undertaking cost analyses of implementation activities; and, examining more comprehensively the practicality of the work experience component currently proposed.

It is interesting and, perhaps, useful to note that comments made by Colloquium participants overwhelmingly reflected a gradual and evolutionary view of the change process in educational innovation, in contrast to a dramatic or revolutionary sense of change. This may be important for program planners to consider, inasmuch as it suggests that a certain amount of patience and caution is required to ensure successful implementation.